

DOUBLE CANYON

WINEMAKER KATE MICHAUD

WINEMAKERS ARE FREQUENTLY CALLED ARTISTS.

Perhaps that explains how, Kate Michaud, an art history major, ended up in wine country exercising her creative inclinations in the cellar. Michaud was born in the Midwest, but spent her formative years in Europe. One might conclude it was there she learned about wine, but that wasn't the case.



Upon graduating from college, Kate spent a winter in Colorado, snowboarding and working odd jobs, shoveling snow and doing mechanical work. Though insignificant at the time, Kate learned something about herself during this period, realizing that she enjoyed working with her hands doing physical labor. That same winter she developed an interest in drinking wine. These combined realizations informed her decision to pursue winemaking.

Drawn first into the industry through the hard work of pulling hoses, cleaning tanks, and moving barrels, Kate cut her teeth as a cellar worker at Bonny Doon Vineyard in Santa Cruz. From there she traveled to Western Australia to work a harvest in the Margaret River region. When she returned to Santa Cruz, Michaud landed the position of assistant enologist at David Bruce Winery. A short time later, eastern Washington beckoned with its undiscovered potential, and Michaud followed. As assistant winemaker at Canoe Ridge Vineyard in Walla Walla, she finally had her own wines to nurture and was responsible for all phases of winemaking. She married a fellow enologist, set down roots, and started a family.

Alas, in search of new challenges, Kate returned to the southern hemisphere to learn cold fermentations at Kim Crawford Winery in New Zealand. She was pregnant, working 12-hour days, 7 days a week. Upon returning to Washington, Kate joined Covey Run, where she managed production and learned the financial and operational sides of the business. By 2013, with over a decade of experience under her belt and critical praise for her wines, Michaud began receiving offers to consult at various wineries across Washington State.

“It’s all about being attentive to what’s happening with the grapes,” says Michaud. “The ideal is to work with good quality vineyards and simply be a shepherd to the fruit.” But that doesn’t mean Kate uses a hands-off approach to winemaking. “I like to blend,” says Michaud. “I spend a lot of time in the blending phase.” Kate approaches her opportunity at Double Canyon with enthusiasm for shaping the future of wines that hail from these renowned Horse Heaven Hills vineyards.

“What’s so exciting about Crimson Wine Group is that they have their eye on the long game. They’ve made a lot of investments in equipment and infrastructure. The Double Canyon facility features every bell and whistle imaginable to meet an extraordinarily high quality level. To a winemaker, it’s a dream.” Michaud’s aspiration for Double Canyon going forward is to make fuller, richer Cabernets with bigger extractions that can stand up to more oak. “The key is to achieve a perfect balance so that one doesn’t overshadow the other. It’s tricky getting a bigger, richer wine that doesn’t read hedonistic. That’s where our efforts and all the details come in.”

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